

SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

TICK TRANSMITTED DISEASES

It is important to be aware that many diseases can be transmitted by a tick bite. Avoiding tick bites is the best way to protect yourself. Here are some steps you should take to protect yourself when you plan to spend time outdoors on non-paved surfaces:

1. Wear long pants
2. Tuck your pants into your socks
3. Wear long sleeve shirts
4. Tuck your shirt into your pants
5. Wear light-colored clothing
6. Check your body for ticks
7. Consider using repellents. Always follow directions carefully, especially with children. Avoid prolonged use of repellents.

If you find a tick attached to your skin, remove it promptly. Using tweezers, grasp the tick as close as possible to your skin where the tick is attached. Pull the tick straight out. Be careful not to squeeze or crush the body of the tick. After you remove the tick, clean and disinfect the tick bite and wash your hands. If you have any of the symptoms below, seek medical attention. Blood tests are available that can help doctors diagnose these diseases.

LYME DISEASE: • ← Approximate size of tick that transmits Lyme disease

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium transmitted by the bite of an infected deer tick. Early signs and symptoms of Lyme disease usually appear within a week to a few months. They include:

- ◆ Red, circular rash around the tick bite that grows quite large. You may develop multiple rashes.
- ◆ Flu-like symptoms including fever, headache, fatigue, stiff neck, muscle and/or joint pain.

If left untreated Lyme disease can cause other complications including joint, neurological or heart problems. To avoid these complications, seek medical attention early. Lyme disease is readily treated with antibiotics in early stages.

BABESIOSIS:

Babesiosis is caused by a parasite transmitted by the bite of an infected deer tick. Early signs and symptoms of babesiosis include:

- ◆ Fever, chills, fatigue and jaundice.

These symptoms can develop from one week to twelve months after infection, can be severe and even fatal especially in the elderly and in the immunocompromised. Treatment may be necessary.

EHRLICHIOSIS:

Ehrlichiosis is caused by a bacterium transmitted by the bite of an infected deer, dog or lone star tick. Early signs and symptoms of ehrlichiosis include:

- ◆ Flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, joint and/or muscle pain, and chills.

Other symptoms may include confusion, nausea, vomiting. These symptoms generally appear within one to three weeks after a tick bite. Antibiotic treatment is very effective.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER:

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) is caused by a bacterium (*rickettsiae*) transmitted by the bite of an infected dog tick in this region. Signs and symptoms may appear as early as three days but usually within two weeks. They include:

- ◆ Sudden onset of severe headache, moderate to high fever, deep muscle pains, fatigue, chills, and may include:
- ◆ RASH, which usually appears on the soles of the feet or palms of the hands, arms and legs, and spreads to the trunk and the rest of the body.

Prompt recognition and treatment by your doctor is very important. RMSF is a rare, but serious illness. Early and effective antibiotic treatment by your doctor can be lifesaving.